

Washington, DC -- Congresswoman Linda Sánchez' State Criminal Alien Assistance Program Reimbursement Act, H.R. 1512, passed the House unanimously today on a voice vote. The legislation will help provide millions of dollars for law enforcement agencies by allowing states and localities to be reimbursed for some of the costs of incarcerating criminal aliens before and during trial. The bill now goes to the Senate, where companion legislation has been introduced by Senator Diane Feinstein (D-CA).

“Passing this bill means we are no longer going to force states and localities to bear the brunt of failures in federal immigration policy,” Congresswoman Linda Sánchez said. “States and localities are going to get more chances for reimbursement, which means communities will have more money to invest in public safety.”

The legislation responds to limitations placed on SCAAP payments by the Department of Justice in 2003. The limitations stipulated that states and localities could only be reimbursed for the cost of incarcerating a criminal alien if the alien is eventually convicted of a crime, making many of the costs associated with pre-trial detention ineligible for reimbursement. The changes resulted in hundreds of millions of lost dollars for local and state law enforcement agencies, forcing significant program cuts.

“It is ridiculous that states and counties have been forced to cut public safety programs, and even release suspects early, because public safety budgets are gobbled up by these incarceration costs,” Rep. Sánchez said. “This bill is going to give a boost to local law enforcement agencies, freeing them to invest in the training and equipment they need to keep us all safe.”

The legislation is a result of conversations between Congresswoman Sánchez and law enforcement agencies and their officers on how to fix this problem. H.R. 1512 has 60 Democratic and Republican cosponsors and is endorsed by the U.S./Mexico Border Counties Coalition, the National Association of Counties, the California State Association of Counties, the Los Angeles Sheriffs Department, and numerous law enforcement organizations, including the National Sheriff's Association, the California State Sheriffs' Association, the Sheriffs' Association of Texas, and the Virginia Sheriffs' Association.